

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, MAY 31st, 2020**

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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

York

“Pentecost is one of the most exciting days in our Christian Year. It is the birthday of the church; a time when disciples no longer feared but were energized to proclaim the good news of God’s love through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.”

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Come, Holy Spirit. Inspire our hearts with your fiery presence!

P: Let your flame burn within us, stirring us to action.

L: Come, Holy Spirit. Energize our lives to work for God.

P: Let your wind of hope swirl around us, lifting and moving us from complacency.

L: Come, Holy Spirit. Pour your blessing on us.

P: Let your presence challenge us to proclaim God’s presence and love in everything we say and do.

OPENING HYMN: #391 God, Reveal Your Presence

1 God, reveal your presence: as we now adore you
and with awe appear before you.

Here in this your temple: all within keep silence,
gather now with deepest reverence.

You alone God we own,
you, our God and Saviour: praise your name for ever.

2

2 God, reveal your presence: hear the harps resounding;
see the crowds the throne surrounding.
'Holy, holy, holy!' Hear the hymn ascending,
angels, saints, their voices blending.
Bow your ear to us here;
hearken, O Lord Jesus, to our humble praises.

3 O great Fount of blessing, purify my spirit,
trusting only in your merit;
like the holy angels gathered all before you,
may I ceaselessly adore you.
Let your will ever still
rule your church terrestrial, as the hosts celestial.

OPENING PRAYER

Spirit of God, we long to be open to your presence in our church and in our lives. Fill us with your wind and fire, that we might be enlivened again. Help us hear the words as if for the first time, that they might touch us anew. Give us visions and dreams of what you long for in your creation, that we might begin to live them into reality. Come, Spirit; come into our worship, into our church, into our very selves. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME

CHILDREN’S SONG

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God, giver of the Spirit, we sit surrounded by red
and hear the amazing story of Pentecost this morning.
But we've heard it so many times before.
It is so familiar; we've ceased to be amazed and surprised
or filled with excitement.
Forgive us for our complacency. Blow us out of our complacency.
Let the flames of passion dance in our lives.
Inspire us with visions and dreams.
Help us appreciate each gift you give us.
Help us be truly Pentecost People.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Acts 2:1-21 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Peter Addresses the Crowd

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ ‘In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,

blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

1 Corinthians 12:3-13 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

⁸ To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

One Body with Many Members

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

MESSAGE

Our focus is on Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. This Sunday is also known as the birthday of church... a day of celebration and day to repower the enthusiasm of our faith as Christians.

I’m thinking of the reality we experience from time to time of losing our enthusiasm, feeling burned out, getting to a place in life where the thrill is gone, and we just don’t care.

Say, you start a new job. You can’t wait to get to work in the morning. Everything is new and exciting. You meet new people, start

new programs, set new goals. You're on an emotional high, especially as you begin to see results and reap rewards. But, as the new wears off and you line out your calendar for, say, the fifteenth year in a row, you find yourself having to push harder and harder. The thrill of a new sale or new contact gives way to the routine of just making another call or filing away another case.

What do you do when the fire grows cold?

– Setbacks, disappointments and failures on the job can cause you to lose heart and wonder, “What’s the point?”

– Individuals and organizations betray your confidence and let you down

– Of course, burnout is a problem we all recognize. It’s particularly prevalent in the helping professions, where individuals give so much of themselves for so long they don’t have anything left to give. Social workers, teachers and ministers consistently head the list.

– And, to be honest, sometimes we simply lose interest and don’t know why. Couples talk about falling out of love. Preachers talk about being called out of ministry. Folks who were once active in the life of the community drop out and let others take the lead.

For whatever reason, it’s not uncommon for the fire within us to grow cold. The question is, when it does, how do you get it going again?

As I said, this pertains to a lot of different aspects of life, but, for the purposes of the sermon this morning, I’d like to zero in on Pentecost and the matter of faith: When you lose your zeal for the Lord; when God seems distant and far away; when scripture no longer speaks to you as it once did; when you find it hard to pray ... what can you do to get back on track?

Let’s start by refreshing our memories. What, exactly, happened on the day of Pentecost? According to Luke, “...they were all with one accord in one place.” (Acts 2:1)

Earlier, Luke told us the disciples had gone back “into the upper room, where they were staying.” (Acts 1:13), and he named the eleven remaining disciples. He also mentioned Jesus’ mother and other

women, whom he doesn’t name. Then he went on to say that, in all, there were a hundred and twenty believers gathered there. So, it was a big room, and it was crowded. Then Luke says,

“Suddenly there came from the sky a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Tongues like fire appeared and were distributed to them, and one sat on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak.” (Acts 2:2-4)

It must have been an awesome experience. It certainly got the attention of the neighborhood. A crowd gathered to see what was going on, and it led Peter, who’d never preached a sermon before in his life, to stand tall and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. In response, Luke says,

“There were added that day (to the disciples’ number) about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41)

If you go on and read the rest of Acts and follow the development of the early church, you’ll find that this was only the beginning. The disciples’ enthusiasm was contagious. In time, the gospel spread from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and to the ends of the earth, just as Jesus had predicted. (Acts 1:8)

Sounds easy, huh? If you’re on fire for the Lord, all you have to do is say the word.

But what if the fire has grown cold? What if the flames of Pentecost are now little more than smoldering embers? Can you rekindle the glow? If so, how? What follows is my own prescription for getting the fire going again. See if it works for you.

First, break the cycle. We’re all prone to getting into a rut. Routines are an essential part of life. You can drive to work without even thinking about where to turn. But when a routine turns into a rut, it can lead to a downward spiral.

So, I am saying to each of you.... God put us here to make a difference. God gave each of us gifts and abilities to use for the common good. When we use them as God intended, they’re a source of joy and self-fulfillment. But when they become a weight and a source of drudgery, it’s time to do something different, or, at least take a break.

And so, my first suggestion for rekindling the fire within is to break the cycle. Step out of the rut you're in and get a new perspective on life. Get up at a different time, change your diet, turn off the T.V. and read a book instead. Take up a new hobby. Get some exercise. Step out of your comfort zone. It'll make you feel better.

That's the first step. The second is to go back to the basics. A fire starts going out the minute you stop kindling it.

How true, not only of preaching, but of living: When we stop reading and studying and reaching out for new life experiences and, instead, become content on recycling the old stories of the past, the fire within us grows cold in a hurry.

To keep this from happening, we need to go back to the basics and spend a little time each day reading the Bible, praying to God and doing good deeds for others. It's amazing how stale life can become when you get away from these basic disciplines.

So, pick a book of the Bible you've never studied before. You'll be surprised what you'll find. And if you feel as though you've said all you know to say in prayer, try praying without words. Start with a simple 5 minutes alone with God in silence each day. I think you'll find that God has a lot to say to you. And, practice random acts of kindness and, when possible, do it anonymously.

Go back to the basics. That's the second step. And the third... Stay connected. It might say that sounds great Peggy but how do we stay connected in times like these... pick up the phone, email, text, face time, there are lots of ways to stay connected.

There's a certain stimulation in talking and sharing with each other. Connecting with new and old friends gives us affirmation and support. And, whether we're aware of it or not, we're a catalyst to others, as well. It all works together: What goes around, come around.

My friend, Ted Smith, likes to say, "Christianity is always personal, but never individual." And it's true: While each of us has his/her own destiny to fulfill, God calls us to live together, work together and worship together in community to the glory of His name. As we do, the spark of faith within us is rekindled and spread to warm and enlighten others.

Well, let's wrap it up. Just as God poured out his Spirit on the disciples on the day of Pentecost, God comes to us in wind and flames. Yet, from time to time, the fire grows cold. When it does, we need to break the cycle and get out of the rut we're in; go back to the basics of reading our bibles, praying and service; and stay connected and work together. Because we are one in the spirit ... we are one in the Lord.

HYMN: #382 Breathe on Me, Breath of God

- 1 Breathe on me, breath of God,
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love,
and do what thou wouldst do.
- 2 Breathe on me, breath of God,
until my heart is pure,
until my will is one with thine,
to do and to endure.
- 3 Breathe on me, breath of God,
till I am wholly thine,
until this earthly part of me
glows with thy fire divine.
- 4 Breathe on me, breath of God:
so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
of thine eternity.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Knock us off our seats, O Lord, with the wind of your Holy Spirit. Don't let us just sit back and rest as though nothing important was happening. Remind us that you have come to bless and prepare us for your service. Now is the time of proclamation and celebration! Now is the birth of your church, not as an exercise in futility, but as a dynamic group of people who know you and love you as you know and love each of us. Flame up our hearts! Make us so joyful that we find it difficult to sit back and watch. We want to be part of your healing love and mercy. We want to be people who bear the word that your love for us is eternal; that

Jesus Christ, our Savior, proclaimed and taught that love in all that he did and said, modeling for us a new way to live. Pick us up and propel us forward into your world. Help us to remember that you have given to us what we need to be your disciples. We just need to say a resounding "Yes!" to you. Thank you for all the wondrous patience and blessings you pour into our lives each and every day, as we offer our lives back to you in joy and hope. AMEN.

CLOSING HYMN: #376 Spirit of the Living God

- 1 Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
 Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
 Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me.
 Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

- 2 Spirit of the living God, move among us all;
 make us one in heart and mind, make us one in love:
 humble, caring, selfless, sharing.
 Spirit of the living God, fill our lives with love!

SENDING FORTH

BENEDICTION

Go forth now as Pentecost people, filled with the Spirit, dreaming dreams, and seeing visions of God's possibilities.

We go forth, knowing we are beloved and blessed by a God who never leaves us alone.

Go, to be surprised by the Spirit in all that you do and everywhere that you go.

We go, claiming our identity as Pentecost people— people of wind and fire, dreams and visions, people filled with that most amazing and transforming Spirit. Amen.

CHORAL AMEN

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